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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2011

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
United States Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Levin:

As you prepare to mark up the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization bill, I write today to express my concern with the U.S. Army's proposal to end M1A2 Abrams tank modernization. This proposal threatens our armored ground capability, places in jeopardy our manufacturing base and would result in the loss of thousands of good paying manufacturing jobs around the country. With the termination of the Army's Future Combat System, the Army must continue to rely on the Abrams for ground combat operations for years to come. Ending Abrams production places at risk our ability to provide our soldiers with the most lethal and survivable tank in the world.

The Army's proposal would place in jeopardy the highly-skilled, high-wage workforce that makes up the unique armor industrial base. In addition, over 600 subcontractors around the United States would be affected and it is estimated that 15 percent of critical vendors will close their facilities. Last year, I visited the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center in Lima, Ohio, where the Abrams is modernized and met with many of the Center's highly-skilled workers. I have also met with representatives from many of the Ohio-based critical suppliers to the tank program. This is a specialized workforce, one which has played a critical role in ensuring our soldiers have the right materiel today and in the future.

Lastly, the Army's proposal is a bad deal for U.S. taxpayers. It is estimated that mothballing the Abrams manufacturing capability would cost approximately \$1.6 billion while building tanks 70 tanks per year until a planned restart in 2016 would cost \$1.4 billion. The Army has not budgeted for these costs and there is no certainty that this critical manufacturing base could even be reconstituted.

Continuing M1A2 Abrams modernization is essential to maintain our ground combat edge on today's and future battlefields. The Army has been building tanks since 1941. Breaking tank production has been proposed previously and rejected each time. It should be rejected again. Therefore, I urge you to authorize funding for production of 70 M1A2 Abrams tanks in your mark up of the Defense Authorization bill. Thank you and I look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator